



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2900 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2900

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
POLICY

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICY REGARDING
DISPOSITION OF ARTIFACTS

This policy provides United States Department of Defense (DoD) guidance for handling requests by next of kin for artifacts pertaining to prisoners of war (POW) and missing in action (MIA) that have been recovered by the United States Government (USG) or are held by foreign governments or foreign private citizens.

Requests for such items shall be made by the primary next of kin or person authorized to direct disposition through Service casualty offices or Service mortuary affairs offices, as appropriate.

DoD policy for handling next-of-kin requests for artifacts is as follows:

Artifacts Possessed by the Department: The Department will turn over personal effects identifiable with a specific individual or a token piece of equipment, should no personal effects exist, at the request of the next of kin. This will only be done when such items are no longer required for investigative work by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, or other agencies involved in the identification or case resolution process. The appropriate Service will determine the person eligible to receive such effects.

We will not knowingly provide contaminated items. However, personal effects and issued equipment provided to the next of kin in good faith may have been exposed to hazardous contamination as a result of the loss incident or from natural environmental and equipment deterioration or wartime exposure. We urge caution in their handling and storage.

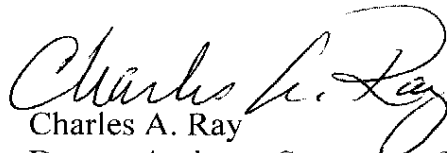
The Department will retain possession of the following: aircraft wreckage, weapons and ammunition or parts thereof, including items on the U.S. Munitions List (22 CFR 121) and items requiring demilitarization; and all unidentifiable artifacts.

Requests for information pertaining to currently held or returned artifacts, and disclosure of the person to whom they were returned, will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act (5 USC 522a) and the Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552).

Personal Artifacts Possessed by Foreign Governments: If the unaccounted-for individual was a POW, at the request of the next of kin, the USG will ask the possessing government to return those personal effects, as defined by the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Articles 17, 18, and 48) and Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Article 97).

There is no requirement for foreign governments to honor requests for the return of personal effects possessed by foreign governments and associated with a Service member who never became a POW. In such cases, we cannot provide direct assistance on behalf of next of kin but will assist indirectly by forwarding requests to foreign governments on behalf of next of kin. The Department will also offer the next of kin assistance in translating written correspondence to and from the foreign government, if required. We will not provide assistance to next of kin who are attempting to obtain artifacts of a non-personal nature from a foreign government.

Artifacts Possessed by Foreign Nationals: The Department will not provide direct assistance on behalf of next of kin for requests for personal effects in the possession of individual foreign nationals. We will assist indirectly, if possible, by providing the requesting next of kin available unclassified and otherwise releasable information regarding the address of foreign nationals who may possess such artifacts, and the next of kin can personally request the return of artifacts. We will also offer assistance in translating written correspondence to and from foreign nationals, if required. We will not provide assistance to next of kin who are attempting to obtain artifacts of a non-personal nature associated with unaccounted-for Americans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles A. Ray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" being the most prominent part.

Charles A. Ray
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs